

MANIFESTO
TO THE
FARM PEOPLE OF ALBERTA

MEMORANDUM FROM BOARD OF
THE U.F.A.
WITH AMENDMENTS

PASSED BY THE ANNUAL CONVENTION, JANUARY, 1931

Your Board has been giving serious consideration to the economic crisis through which Canada and indeed the whole world is passing at the present time. We are of the opinion that the present crisis is a phase of the disintegration of competitive civilization and that it must be faced in a manner which will relieve human suffering as far as possible during the period of readjustment through which we must pass and at the same time there must be continued effort to deal with fundamentals having regard to future welfare. We are fully convinced that while relief measures assist there is no immediate cure for our economic ills but that the hope of civilization rests upon human ability to build a co-operative commonwealth. That commonwealth cannot be obtained by mob uprisings or panic but by orderly organized and united movement and a developed capacity for collective responsibility. There is suffering and there probably will be suffering for some time, but we will come through it we move together with one co-operative purpose. At any rate there is no one to save us but ourselves. We are more than ever convinced that the U.F.A. as a democratic organization is capable of development to the utmost extent of our requirements; that in it we have an instrument of citizenship the efficiency of which must necessarily depend upon the intelligence and loyalty of those composing it. That by the practice of the fullest co-operation by all its members and by applying itself unremittingly to the work that lies before it, all the aims and objects of the Association for the betterment of its members socially, politically and industrially can be attained. In order that these objectives may be achieved we believe it to be essential that all our co-operative forces be co-ordinated and unified in one militant whole. Your Board therefore is in full accord with the resolution which will be presented to this Convention from the Alberta Co-operative Wholesale.

Your Board of Directors presents to you the following recommendations, some of which are immediate while others are fundamental.

TAXATION

That we call to the attention of the Provincial Government the impossibility, owing to present economic conditions of farmers meeting present taxation and in particular their inability to pay out of one crop the current taxes with all arrears and the heavy penalties now attaching thereto therefore we urge:—

(1) That the Provincial Government use the utmost economy in the administration of the affairs of the Province in order as far as possible to reduce taxation.

(2) That the Executive take the first opportunity to urge upon the Government a policy of consolidation of all arrears of taxes to be paid over a period of years with provision for a rebate or remission of penalties.

INTEREST

In view of present prices of farm products this Convention recognizes that the accumulation of interest at the rates charged by many credit organizations constitute an intolerable burden and will greatly delay the return of Agriculture to normal conditions and urges (1) that the Federal Govern-

ment by appropriate legislation definitely fix a maximum legal rate of interest which may be collected in any proceedings with adequate penalties for non compliance.

(2) That as soon after this Convention as possible the Executive confer with the various organizations of creditor interests with a view to effecting voluntary reductions or remission of interest rates on overdue accounts.

(3) That in the event of the failure of these negotiations the Government concerned be urged to pass such measures as may be necessary to meet this situation by way of compulsory adjustment.

(4) That this Convention protest against the prevailing practice of the charter banks charging higher rate of interest for doing business in Western Canada than in Eastern Canada, and that every effort be taken by the Organization both by conference with the banks and by recommendations to the Government to remove this inequality.

RELIEF

Realizing the intolerable condition of affairs that will result when creditors press for full and immediate payment on the improvement of crop conditions and crop prices we urge:—

(1) That the Executive confer with the Provincial Government with a view to the necessary extension to the Debt Adjustment Act and organization to adequately protect the debtors in the various parts of the Province.

(2) That the Executive through the press and by organization and instructions to Locals fully acquaint the farmers of their legal rights and remedies and proceed in order that these Locals may act as intermediaries between the debtors and the creditors.

(3) That the Executive urge upon the Provincial Government that in shaping its program of public works and particularly its road program for the coming year, the program be organized so as to afford in greatest measure work for the people in the areas adjacent to such public works.

That the Executive fully inform all Locals of the measures that have been taken by the Dominion and Provincial Governments and municipalities for relief purposes in order that such locals may assist needy individual members in obtaining such relief and further that such locals see to it that as far as possible such work in administered by local authorities fairly and in accordance with the intention of the Governments.

CREDIT

That we as delegates assembled recognizing the inadequacy of the existent credit system in meeting present economic stringency and believing that adequate distribution of credit is absolutely essential to the carrying on of the agricultural industry recommend:—

(1) That this organization continue to advocate at all times the complete nationalization of our credit system.

(2) That as an immediate measure the Federal Government take steps to organize a federal reserve bank of issue and discount which Bank shall be entirely under Government control and shall provide credit at a reasonable rate of interest for all necessary productive and commercial enterprises.

We are convinced that the above proposal is imperative in order to get away from the present intolerable position in which the credit requirements of the public in general are sacrificed to the professed necessity of the charter banks to protect to the utmost their savings deposits.

(3) We specifically recommend that the directors of the Wheat Pool should thoroughly canvass the possibility of their financing the marketing of their grain through utilization and extension of our present Finance Act.

MARKETS

That we commend the efforts made by the Federal Government in the past in the establishment of trade agencies and recommend that still greater efforts be made in extending the markets for farm products and to this end we particularly recommend:-

(1) The establishment of adequate trade organizations in Japan and China to assist in marketing our farm products in those countries.

(2) Until such time at least as our surplus wheat has been absorbed that the Government investigate the possibility of increasing sales to China by adequate extensions of credit.

(3) That in order to build up, encourage and develop markets for live stock and dairy products in Great Britain the Federal Department of Trade and Commerce should at an early date call the packers, Livestock Pool and other related interests into conference with a view of formulating a co-operative agreement for regular minimum monthly shipments of their commodities to the British market.

(4) Whereas, the present price of wheat is far below the cost of production; and

Whereas, a continuation of such a condition will inevitably mean a lower standard of living for agriculture; and

Whereas, no benefit of the low price is being passed on to the consumer in the way of cheaper bread;

Therefore be it resolved, that an international conference be called representative of all wheat exporting countries, with the aim of stabilizing the producing of and the export price for wheat, to enable the grower to meet the cost of production and obtain a reasonable profit; and

Further be it resolved, that Canada, through her Prime Minister be the convener of such conference, which should be called at the earliest possible date

(5) Whereas, the condition brought about by our inability to secure markets for the Canadian wheat crop has created a situation that threatens to cripple or destroy the whole business industries of Canada;

Be it resolved, that we request the Federal Government to issue wheat certificates (or dollars) redeemable in wheat and receivable in payment of taxes; and

Be it further resolved, that the Government take over the 1930 wheat crop at a price approximating the cost of production and pay the producer for same with wheat certificates.

That we reaffirm our support of all efforts to encourage reciprocal trade between Great Britain and Canada, and the extension if necessary of preferential tariff by Canada to encourage such trade.

TARIFF

That as an organization we reaffirm our belief in the general principle of free trade and will continue to advocate it but in the meantime recognizing that the tariff will continually be before the Federal House we urge upon our Executive and the members of the Federal House of Commons the desirability of examining the incidence of the various items in the tariff schedule in order to assure that the economic interest of the farmers of Western Canada be adequately and justly safeguarded.

OTHER IMPORTANT ACTIONS OF THE CONVENTION

100 Per Cent. Pool.

Dealing with the question of creating by legislation a pool which would market all wheat grown, a question now agitating the mind of Western Canada, the Convention went on record as favoring the taking of the necessary steps according to the plan now being adopted in Saskatchewan.

Briefly the plan is as follows:

(1) To take a plebiscite of the members of the Alberta Wheat Pool as now constituted.

(2) In the event of that plebiscite giving sufficient mandate to proceed to take a further plebiscite of all wheat growers in the Province.

In Saskatchewan legislation is being considered to set up the necessary machinery for the marketing of agricultural products on a commodity pool basis. Under this legislation the producers of any agricultural commodity would be enabled to determine by plebiscite requiring a two-thirds majority vote whether or not they would pool the entire commodity grown in the province.

It is necessary to note that it is the intention that the operation of such a pool when organized should be entirely under the control of the producers contributing the commodity to the pool.

Co-operative Purchasing.

With a view to "consolidating the buying and selling organizations of the farmers into one organization with centralized management" the Convention gave a mandate to the Board to call a conference of all co-operative bodies immediately.

The first step was taken within a few days, when some forty persons, members of the boards of the various organizations which have arisen out of the U.F.A. met and considered the question of ways and means to pool the purchasing power of the farmers. The Alberta Co-operative Council was asked to take the next step and that body will shortly call into conference representatives of the larger district co-operatives to further carry out the idea. This will probably necessitate a gathering of the boards of all co-operative organizations. It is widely recognized that in such action there is hope of immediate and permanent relief from the disabilities under which the people of our rural communities suffer.

Investigation Into Speculation in Grain.

Once again the United Farmers have expressed through our Annual Convention the conviction that "the grain exchanges in their present form have a detrimental effect for the producer." The Dominion Parliament is being requested during the present session "to institute a thorough investigation into the speculation in grain," with a view to abolishing all dealing in margins where there is no actual buying and selling of the grain itself.

In the event of the present agitation for one all inclusive wheat marketing agency there would be no legitimate field of operation left for grain exchanges in Canada.

Reduction in Freight and Express Rates.

As one means of providing immediate relief to farmers who though suffering from an enormous reduction in income have still to meet the same charges for transportation of their products as was the case when agricultural values were much higher, the Convention urged upon the Government of Alberta to "press for a drastic reduction in freight and express rates on all railroads in Canada."

Public Ownership of Land and Resources.

Looking into the future, but having immediate bearing because the Province of Alberta has now come into possession of its natural resources, the Convention went on record as being in favor of public ownership of all land and all natural resources, possession being granted for use on lease.

It will be seen that such a proposal involves far-reaching changes in the economic structure. It should be noted that the sponsors of the resolution indicated that the immediate application was to the unalienated land and other resources.

Further Copies can be obtained from U.F.A. Central Office